/68 cont./

• 165 d) Unfortunately, however, the index of child mortality is still very high. Prior to the establishment of hospitals and [797] ambulatories by the Salesian Missions, about 50 per cent of the children from 2 to 10 years of age died because of the lack of hygiene.

164 More alarming still is the danger of tuberculosis. Sent by the Colombian government, in August of 1955 the phthisiologist Dr. Alvaro Arguillo Pinzon visited the populations of the Uaupés and Papurí. Soon after his visit to this latter river, at the povoados of the Colombian bank as well of the Brazilian one, he affirmed to us in Iauareté that 75 per cent of the indigenous population was already infected by the Koch bacillus. The affirmation is painfully true. Not only are the Indians ignorant of the simplest standards of hygiene suitable to the case (they live together in the same environment filled with carbonic anhydride from the always lighted fire, they sleep on the same hammock, put their dirty hands in the common food, drink from the same cuia /gourd container/, consume the remains of the food of the tubercular, sip the drinks chewed perhaps by some infected person, etc.), but also to their mentality the observance of the precautions required by the sickness is excluded. As a matter [753] of fact, they do not believe in sicknesses; they consider themselves immortal. The sicknesses are evils caused by some enemy, and only the pajé /curer-sorcerer/ with his magic practices (practices that in reality often contribute only to making the ailment worse) is able to eliminate them. For [797] this reason, they do not subject themselves to long treatment in the Mission hospitals, to which, ordinarily, they retreat voluntarily and with the permission of the relatives only after having uselessly tried the treatments of various pajés, already in the last days of life. In recent years a considerable proportion of deaths, mainly of adults, has had as causa mortis laryngeal and pulmonary tuberculosis.

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165 The natives who are over 70 years of age are rare; at 50 years of age the Indian is already old (28),

28. The appearance makes one commonly use the word old in order to specify the individual better. Thus one frequently hears: "old Felipe of such-and-such a place," "old Cândido," etc.

and he usually dies before 60.

/69/

Chapter IV

Distinction and Classification

1. Distinction

121 *101 These studies cover, we repeat, the tribes of Brazil and Colombia who populate the basin of the Uaupés. Under such denomination we mean the Uaupés River, from where it enters Brazil, soon after the afflux of the river Querarí, up to its mouth in the Rio Negro, with its two tributaries, the Papurí and the Tiquié, and numerous small tributaries. Our field research covers not only all the human groupings located on the banks of the three rivers above, but also many other groups from the headwaters of those rivers and in the interior of the forest. For this reason it seems to us that we can consider in a general way the large area of the "basin of the Uaupés." All the more since some of the groups that are found farther in the interior on the igarapés belong to the riverine tribes, or at least they have had relations with them for a long time, and in this way there has been cultural assimilation.

5: Goldman E-5 (1939-1940) 1963
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visitor. On the other hand, the leaf-cutter ant is a specialist on clothing. I was once covered by a swarm of these ants while asleep. When I had carefully removed the last of them I was left with but a leather belt and a few tatters of trousers and shirt.

The anopheles mosquito is generally absent in the Cuduiarí region where I did my field work. On the whole, the health of the Cuduiarí Indians is good. Carate (*purú*), a skin pigment disorder apparently of spirochete origin, common everywhere else in the Northwest Amazon, was far less in evidence on the Cuduiarí. Children suffered from worms and other intestinal parasites but infant mortality was not particularly high. There were no epidemics during my stay. The recollections of the Indians about serious illness go back to the 1918 influenza epidemic that apparently ravaged the native populations in the region. Women, in particular, suffered from the painful purulent conjunctivitis, which they attributed to insect molestation in their manioc gardens. The bloated abdomens of children whose diet is too generous with carbohydrate and deficient in protein is a common sight along the Vaupés, but is less evident on the Cuduiarí, where native life and diet is still almost intact. As for the Cuduiarí itself, the people at the mouth of the river, the higher-ranking *Hehéneua* sibs, seemed generally more sturdy, vigorous, and aggressive than the Indians who lived upstream.

Dr. Hamilton Rice, who explored the Vaupés in 1907–08, observed that the most physically powerful Indians came from the Cuduiarí. He noted men who were six feet tall and over, strongly built with thick arms and powerful torsos. Actually somatological variability is considerable on the Cuduiarí, ranging from marked mesomorphy to moderate ectomorphy. But this observation of mine is not based on measurements. Dr. Rice (1910) has published a physical description of the Cubeo based upon anthropometric observations. I quote from it:

> Their color is an olive brown corresponding to No. 4 of Broca's scale and seems invariable, a conclusion based on a comparison of the scale with many hundreds of subjects on parts of the cuticle least exposed to sun and pigmented decoration. The eye is dark, palpebral fissure narrow, not oblique, pointed at its external aspect, and the upper lid so heavy at times as to suggest the puffiness of oedema; but the eye by no means conforms invariably to so Mongolian a criterion, closely resembling the European eye in many other cases. The hair is black, lanky, coarse in the male, fine and glossy in the female. The faces are escutcheon-shaped and hairless, the chins rounded and receding, noses from straight and busque to hooked and Chinese flat types, region of cheek bones flat, lower lips large and inclined to turn slightly downward. The ears are not large, lobes absent or slightly devel-

5: Goldman E-5 (1939-1940) 1963
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always tended to occupy the narrow headwaters of tributaries while the strong and the top-ranking sibs have favored the large rivers and their mighty cataracts. But while these strong and proud sibs in their exposed positions were able to withstand enemy Indians, they have succumbed more to Colombian and Brazilian missionaries and traders. Thus, the sibs that the Indians refer to as our "head" are now the most acculturated, and the low-ranking sibs the least.

I estimate the population of the Cubeo at under 2,500. This is a crude figure based on a calculation of somewhat under 100 persons per sib on the Cuduiarí, the only river that I had occasion to explore along its entire length. Population was undoubtedly greater in the past. On the Cuduiarí there were 29 main residence sites,[2] each averaging some 30 to 35 people, some only a few minutes by canoe from their nearest neighbors, but for the most part they were separated by at least an hour of steady canoeing. This is high population density for the region. On other rivers in the region, houses are separated by at least half a day's journey by canoe. A severe influenza epidemic swept the region in 1917–18 and took a heavy toll of lives, the Indians say. A number of sibs whose names are still remembered are now extinct. The Colombian government census of 1938, which did not tally tribes, listed some 7,000 Indians for the entire *Comisaría del Vaupés* (Colombia, 1942). This figure, too, is surely an estimate, since an accurate head count is virtually impossible. During the period of my stay among them, the Indians, in a state of alarm over rumors that their young men were all to be conscripted for labor in the rubber forests, were understandably nervous about censuses and genealogical explorations so that my own efforts at counting were severely handicapped.

The term "Cubeo" is a Europeanization of the Tucanoan word *kebéwa*, that means, literally, "the people that are not." It is a jest name applied to them by some other Tucanoan-speaking tribe. Most Indians were not aware that they were called "Cubeos," while those who understood what it meant did not like the name. Strictly speaking, there is no tribal name. A man will always identify himself by his sib name, never by phratry and never by tribe. In the course of discussions with the ethnologist on native conceptions of "tribe" the Indians offered some self-designations. The most common was *pamíwa* (first people). They also offered *pwãnwa* (people), and then referred to other tribes as *apépwãnwa* (other people). I doubt, however, that any Cubeo Indian has ever spontaneously declared himself to be a

[2] There is a list of these communities at the end of this chapter.